

**Authors**

Melissa Jenkins  
Elke Selter  
Vibhushan Subba

**Text Editors**

Melissa Jenkins  
Elke Selter

**Photography**

Elke Selter  
Melissa Jenkins

**Layout Designer**

Manohar Rai

**Published in 2006 by**

United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and  
Cultural Organization  
Kathmandu Office  
KAT-CLT-2005/2006

**Printed by**

Design Venture Pvt. Ltd.

For more information please contact:  
UNESCO Kathmandu  
P.O. Box 14391, Jawalakhel, Lalitpur  
Kathmandu, Nepal

Email: [kathmandu@unesco.org](mailto:kathmandu@unesco.org)

Tel: +977-1-5554-396/769  
Fax: +977-1-5554-450

[www.unesco.org/kathmandu](http://www.unesco.org/kathmandu)

KAT/2006/PI/H/7

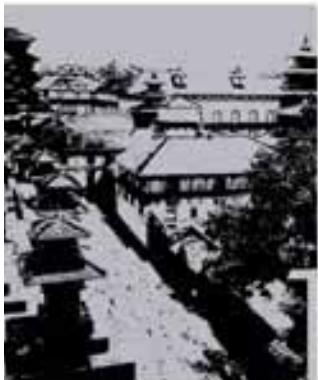


National Federation of  
UNESCO Associations in Japan

**Table of Contents**

Cultural Portrait Handbooks	iv
Introduction	1
Mythical Beginnings	5
Changu Narayan Village	11
The Main Temple	17
Ritual at Changu Narayan	31
Buildings around the Temple	35
Map of Changu Narayan Temple Complex	42
Sculptural Art of Changu Narayan	43
Vishnu Iconography	47
Stone Sculpture in a Living Heritage Site	63
Natural Setting	69
Festivals	71
Hinduism	75
Geanealogy	83





HANUMAN DHOKA DURBAR SQUARE



PATAN DURBAR SQUARE



BHAKTAPUR DURBAR SQUARE



BAUDDHANATH



SWAYAMBHU



PASHUPATI



CHANGU NARAYAN

## CULTURAL PORTRAIT HANDBOOKS

**H**eritage and culture can be discovered and enjoyed throughout the Kathmandu Valley. Seven monument zones in particular were recognised to be of outstanding universal value by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and have therefore been added to the List of World Heritage Sites (WHL).

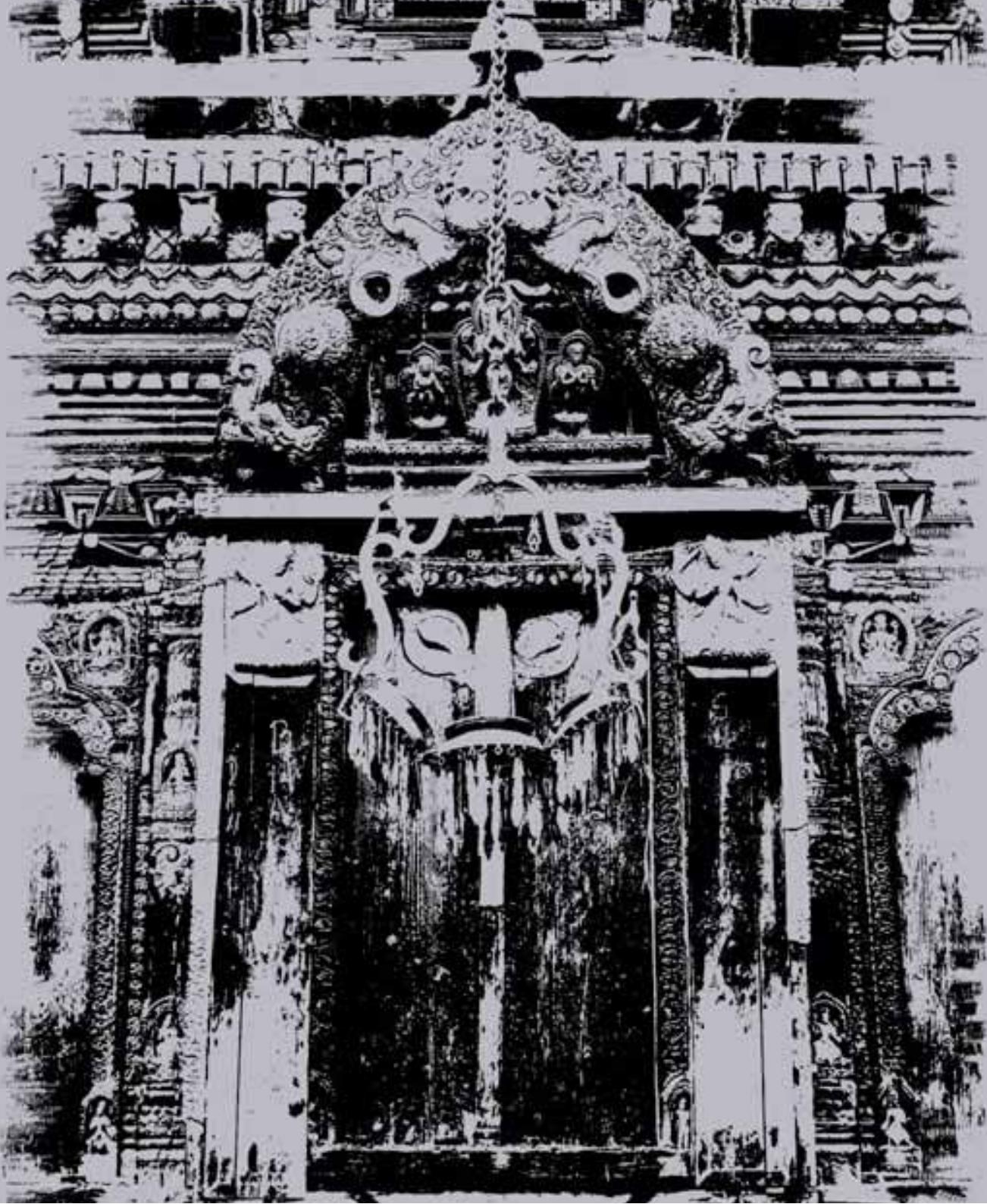
The WHL includes cultural and natural heritage sites from all over the world, and the World Heritage Convention provides a legal tool for their protection. Of the 812 World Heritage Sites, four are located in Nepal, namely the Kathmandu Valley, Sagarmatha National Park, Royal Chitwan National Park and Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha.

The diverse monument zones of the Kathmandu Valley embody the uniquely intricate and yet refined Newari urban buildings and an incredible mix of Hindu and Buddhist culture. The Valley provides an example of mixed architectural styles and exquisite craftsmanship. Its very composition makes it one of the most complex World Heritage Sites on the WHL: not only does it

include the historic centers of the Valley's three main cities; it also encompasses remarkable living Hindu and Buddhist monuments.

The site was listed as a World Heritage Site in 1979 as bearing a unique testimony to a cultural tradition which is living (criteria iii) and is an outstanding example of a group of buildings that illustrate a significant stage in human history (criteria iv). The Valley is also the context for many living traditions and events, with artistic works of outstanding universal value (criteria vi).

This booklet is one of seven that were prepared as part of a wider awareness raising campaign aimed at focusing both local and international attention on the need to preserve the Kathmandu Valley WHS. Generous funding from the National Federation of UNESCO Associations in Japan (NFUAJ) has enabled the UNESCO Office in Kathmandu to prepare these publications highlighting the gems of the Valley and their rich mythological and historical background.



The holy shrine of Changu Narayan is situated atop a range of hills 1541 meters above sea level, 13 km east of Kathmandu and some 5 km north of the city of Bhaktapur. The small hilltop village is home to one of the Valley's oldest and most important temples dedicated to Vishnu (Narayan).

The main temple is located in a courtyard filled with remarkable stone statues and sculptures of the various incarnations of Vishnu. Hindus worship the god residing on this hill as Garuda Narayan whilst Buddhists identify Changu Narayan with Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion.

When approaching Changu Narayan, one is struck by the beauty of the surroundings. Langtang, Dorjay Lakpa, and other snow-topped mountains peep over the ridge of the Kathmandu Valley and the Manohara River meanders across the basin to merge with the sacred Bagmati River.

The history of the site dates back to the 4th century and the first temple is thought to have been built in the time of King Hari Datta Varma in 325 AD. One of the oldest inscriptions found in the valley, which dates to 464 AD, shows that the temple at Changu was already an important spiritual centre at that time.

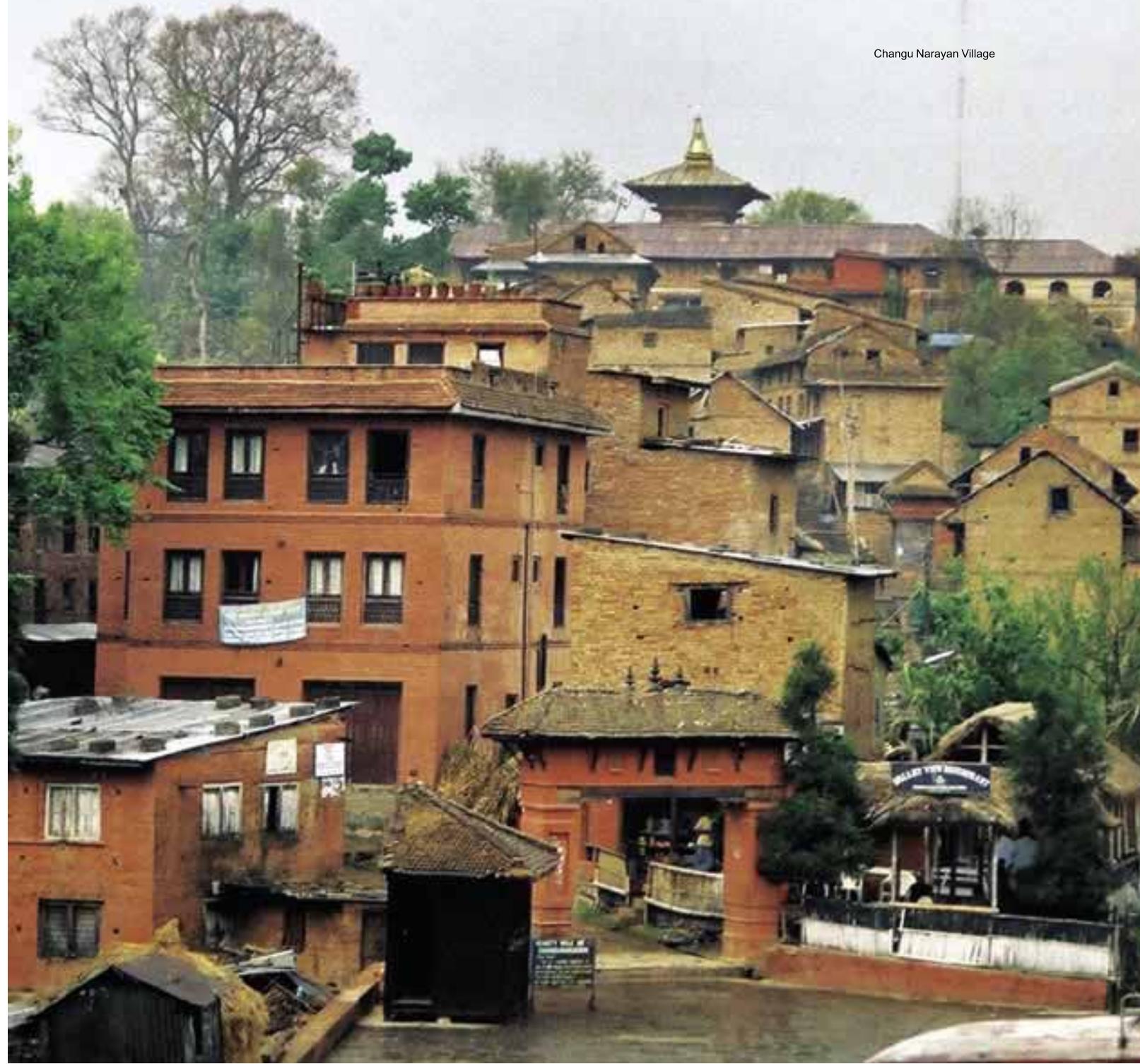
The temple was destroyed many times by earthquake and fire and has been repeatedly restored and embellished. Much of the present temple was built in 1702 to repair fire-damage, although many of the ornaments are much older.

The setting, coupled with the exquisite carvings and the combination of Hindu and Buddhist worship, make the Changu Narayan Temple one of the most representative buildings for the art of the Kathmandu Valley.

Generally the temple is reached from Bhaktapur, by driving up the hill to the bus park below the temple.

Another option is to hike towards Changu Narayan from either Nagarkot or Sankhu. A very interesting route comes from the north where the Sankhu road gives access to a path that crosses the river and leads up the hill to the temple complex.

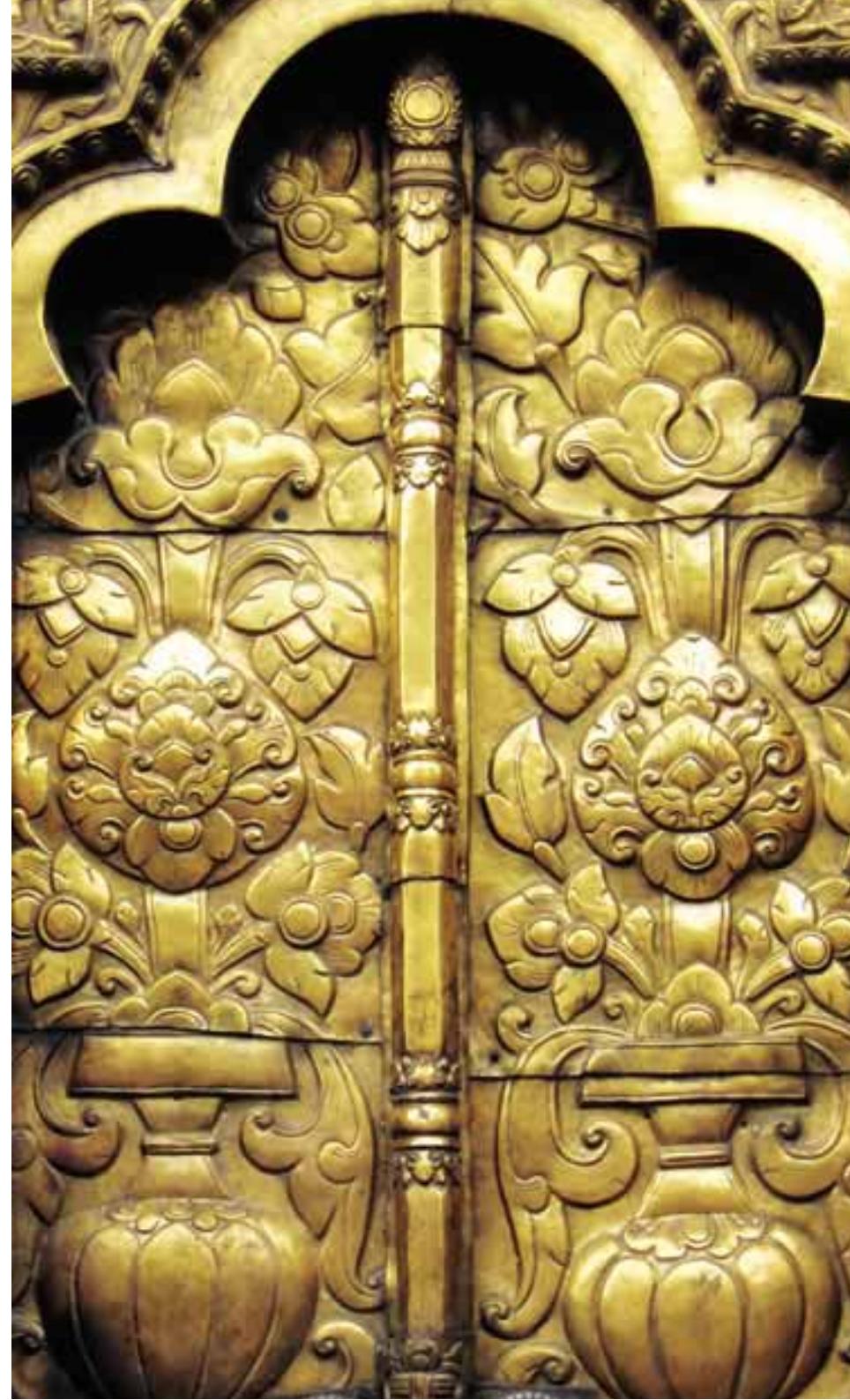
Changu Narayan Village



## MYTHICAL BEGINNINGS

Legend claims that Vishnu, during his endless pursuit of goodwill, unknowingly beheaded a demon-king who was a Brahman, thus committing an unforgivable sin. After realizing what he had done, Vishnu traveled the world on his trusted **Garuda** and finally arrived at the Champaca or Changi forest where he decided to live the rest of his days in repentant anonymity.

An ascetic Brahman named Sudarshana lived in a hermitage not far from the forest of Changi. Although he had restrained from most wordly pleasures and luxuries, Sudarshana had one treasure, a cow. The cow always produced enough milk to feed Sudarshana and any occassional visitors, no matter how large or small their requirements were. All agreed that the fabulous brown cow was comparable to the divine Kamadhenu, a wish-granting cow who was one of the treasures that appeared from the Sea of Milk after the legendary Churning by the Gods and Demons.



### Garuda

Garuda is one of the three principal animal deities in the Hindu Mythology. The other two are **Ganesh**, the elephant-headed son of the goddess Durga, and **Hanuman**, the monkey god. Garuda is the king of the birds, the son of Kashyap, a great sage, and Vinata, a daughter of a famous king. He has the head, wings, talons, and beak of an eagle and the body and limbs of a man.

As the mount of Vishnu, Garuda is venerated by all, including humans. He is also known as **Vinayaka**, a name which he shares with Ganesh. Thus, this god-bird is thought to be a remover of obstacles. His image is often placed near Vishnu in temples and he is usually depicted carrying Vishnu in the skies on his back. To this day Garuda is much revered by devout Hindus for his ethics and strength.



However, one day, when Sudarshana's cow went to graze in the forest, Vishnu appeared out of a Champaca tree and secretly drank her milk. From that moment on, the cow was not able to produce milk for the ascetic.

On the eighth day, after a very hungry night, Sudarshana decided to accompany his cow into the forest and find out who was stealing the milk. The cow, as usual, walked towards the tree in which Vishnu resided and the God appeared as soon as she arrived.

When Sudarshana saw the stranger milking her he could not control his anger and attacked and beheaded the thief. Then, suddenly, the headless body transformed and Vishnu appeared seated on top of his mount, Garuda.

As soon as he realized what he had done, the ascetic went into shock and fainted. After regaining consciousness, and still very much ashamed of his deeds, he pleaded with Vishnu to be killed.

Vishnu, however, told Sudarshana how he himself had beheaded the Brahman demon and that this was why he was now residing in the Champaca tree in the Changu forest. After having killed the demon, a curse was laid on Vishnu, which stated that one day he would be beheaded by a member of the same clan as the Brahman demon.

The God explained that thanks to the action of the ascetic the curse was now rescinded and he promised to stay in the Changu forest. In return, he requested Sudarshana to offer daily pujas. This way, Vishnu was

established in Changu and Sudarshana became his first pujari (priest).

In another version of the legend Sudarshana came upon a little boy stealing milk. When he tried to catch him, the boy disappeared inside a Champaca tree. The Brahman cut open the tree and the severed head of Vishnu rolled out.

Both stories expiate Vishnu who emerged from self-imposed banishment in full glory mounted on Garuda, and declared that henceforth he should be worshipped in this form on top of the Changu hill.

To this day, a daily ritual known as the **nitya puja** is performed at the Changu temple. This ritual symbolizes the decapitation of Vishnu. The pujari enters the central shrine, where an image of Vishnu is housed. The head of the image is protected by a two-piece metal cover. The priest removes the upper section of the gilt metal sheath of the central image, performs puja to the 'decapitated' image and replaces the gilded cover before leaving the temple (see page 32).

Changu Narayan Temple  
main entrance





# CHANGU NARAYAN VILLAGE



Today, the bus park is empty. In the wee hours of the morning Changu Narayan looks abandoned, like some treasure that has been tucked away and forgotten. A dog tethered to the fence has jumped to its feet and is listening attentively. The sound of footsteps grows louder. The dog has bared its teeth and is pulling at its chain, barking at an old man with a load of firewood on his back. The old man walks on without turning and silence descends once again.

In the distance, the sun is just appearing from behind the mountains and a cold breeze sweeps across the bus park. A little further up the hill, in the houses that flank the path that leads up to the temple, there is some movement. The

lower floors of these houses open into small shops selling thangkas (scroll paintings), oriental puppets and pieces of traditional Newari woodwork.

The village of Changu Narayan is not much more than an alignment of small houses along the path leading up to the main temple and a number of farms spread around the hill. In recent years souvenir shops and a number of local tea shops and restaurants have appeared throughout the village. The Newar settlement is a good example of a typical local village. The road to and from Changu, as well as the village itself, and the views of the surrounding forest and mountains are a welcome change to traffic and buzz of the urbanized Valley below.





### Changu Museum

Along the main path to the Changu Narayan temple, a local house has been converted into the first private museum in Nepal. It is full of intriguing objects such as ancient coins, cooking utensils, tools, musical instruments and portraits.

The museum is housed in a old Newari village house and provides a good opportunity to see the interior of a traditional house.

The upper storey, where most artifacts are kept, can be accessed by means of a wooden staircase. The entire legend of Changu Narayan has been sketched and explained and hangs on the wall of the museum.

The museum was established with the permission of the Changu Narayan Village Development Committee and a small entrance fee is levied. A guide usually accompanies visitors.

Changu Narayan Temple



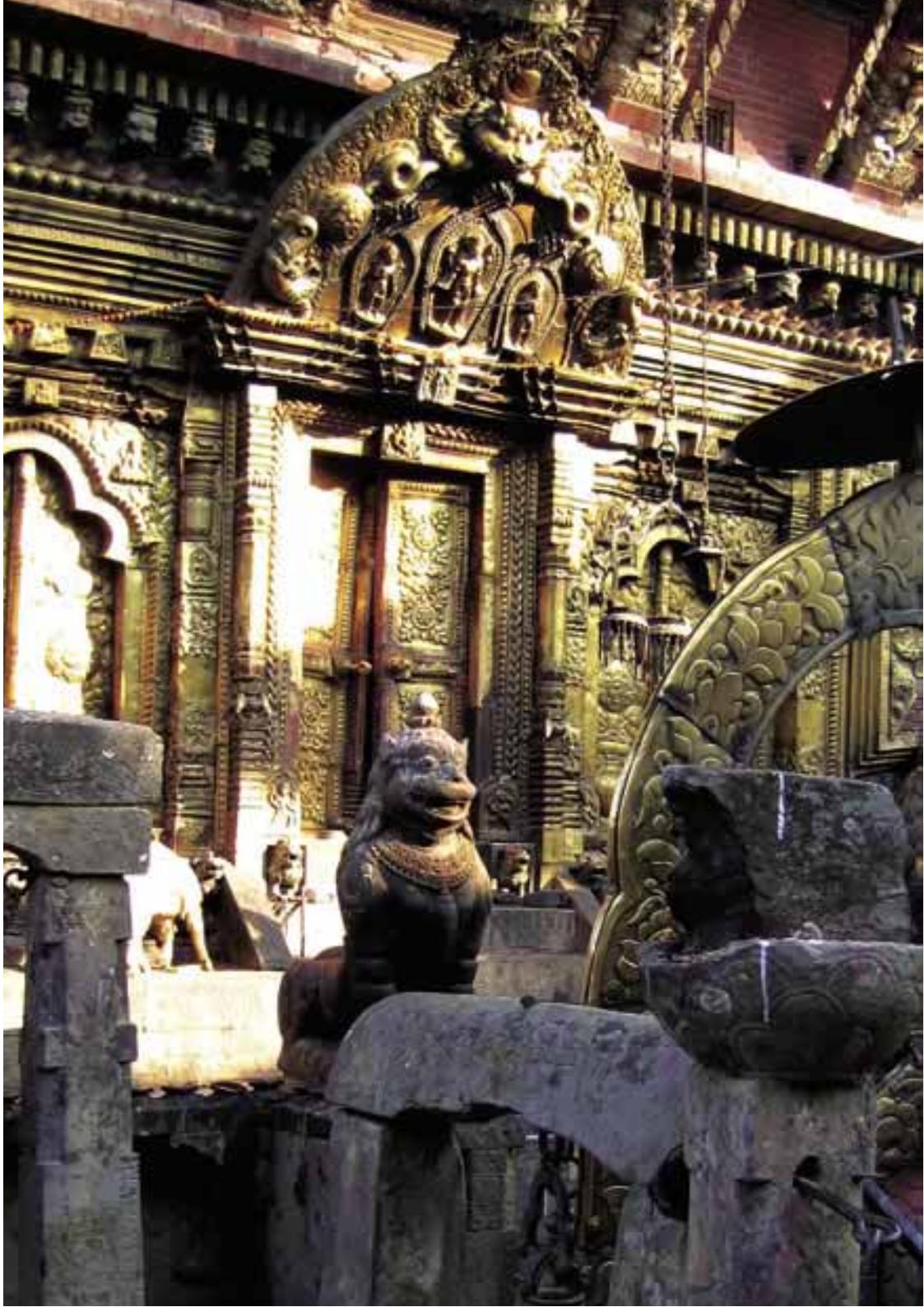
## THE MAIN TEMPLE

The two-roofed temple of Narayan (Vishnu) at Changu stands slightly off centre in a courtyard surrounded by dharamshala or rest houses. In addition to the main temple, other temples and numerous statues and reliefs are housed in the courtyard.

The temple of today dates back to 1702 when it was reconstructed after a fire, but the original was much older. The initial Narayan temple was built in the 4th century, making it one of the oldest in the Valley. The original structure has disappeared, but several sculptures from the Licchavi period can still be seen in the courtyard.

The lower roof of the Narayan temple is covered with traditional red jinghati tiles and is marked by small bells with leaf-shaped pendants. Though the wind seldom blows hard enough to make them ring, the bells serve the purpose of pleasing Vishnu with their sweet sound. The sound encourages the god to descend to the ground in order to hear the prayers of the people.



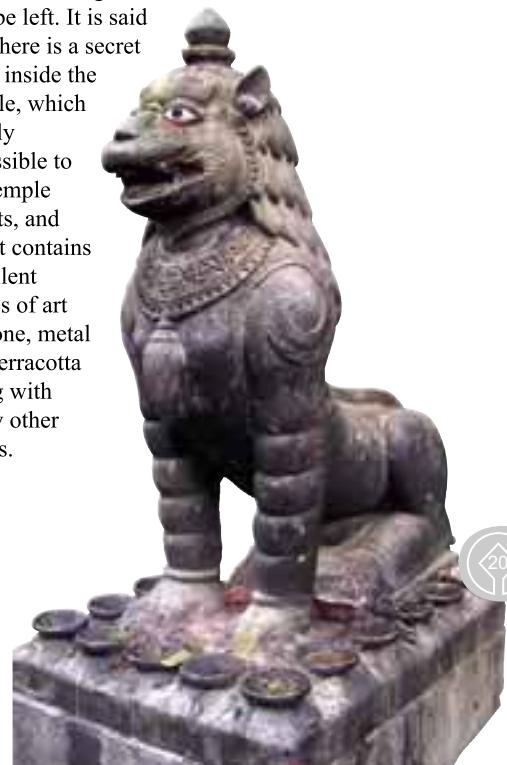


The upper roof is of gilt-copper topped with a gilded pinnacle of five spires under a parasol. Both the roofs are supported by 18th century wooden struts which bear painted figures of the incarnations of Vishnu with multi-armed deities and other tantric forms seated below.

There are triple doorways on all four sides of the temple, each surmounted by a beautiful **torana**. These toranas act as a symbolic window into the temple, projecting desired images that allow a vision of the deity within. The torana over the main (west) door of the central shrine depicts Vishnu flanked by his consorts and is a stunning piece of repoussé metalwork. Over Vishnu is the head of a huge **Garuda** with one of his age-old adversaries, a **naga** (snake), between his teeth.

The entrances to the temple are protected by different guardians: elephants, griffins, lions and sarduls (mythical man-bird beasts). For the majority of pious worshippers the

doors mark the final destination, and it is here that offerings of flowers, fruit and other gifts will be left. It is said that there is a secret vault inside the temple, which is only accessible to the temple priests, and that it contains excellent pieces of art in stone, metal and terracotta along with many other riches.



#### Garuda and the Amrita

The great Hindu epic Mahabharata (see page 79) tells the story of Garuda's valiant rescue mission to save his mother from the clutches of his father's second wife Kadri, mother of the nagas. In order to secure her release, Garuda offered to bring her jailors the amrita (elixir of life). The faithful son flew to the heavens and stole the amrita from the God Indra. He returned home without submitting to temptation and tasting the elixir himself. It was this display of abstinence that prompted Vishnu to bestow the blessing of eternal life upon him, and the right to be seated above the Lord. In turn, Garuda offered himself as Vishnu's mount.

Garuda went immediately to secure the release of his mother, leaving the amrita on sharp kusha grass for the nagas to collect. As soon as Garuda's mother was free, and whilst the nagas were performing purifying rituals before imbibing the elixir, Indra stole the amrita back, as had been pre-arranged with Garuda. As Indra swept off a couple of drops of the precious liquid spilled onto the razor-sharp grass, which the desperate snakes licked off. The tongues of the nagas have been split since that day.





Sankha Pillar

The famous **pillar of Manadeva** is situated to the left (north) of the main entrance. Its original location might have been directly in front of the entrance because a stub of stone still exists there. It stands on a circular stone base and bears a lotus capital and Vishnu's chakra (discus) symbolizing the universal mind, which was added in 1860. There is an inscription on the pillar dating from 464 AD which records how King Manadeva persuaded his mother Rajyavati not to commit sati on the funeral pyre of her husband. **Sati** is the ancient Hindu custom which dictated that wives had to join their dead husbands by immolating themselves on the funeral pyre. The inscription records how Manadeva promised to end his life if his mother performed the terrible act. It also describes how Manadeva managed to

subdue the 'vassals' to the east and conquered the kingdom of 'Mallapuri' beyond the Gandaki river to the west, before returning to his mother.

On the other side of the Manadeva pillar, to the right (south) of the main entrance stands a second stone pillar supporting a huge **sankhu** (conch) of Vishnu. The sankhu represents the five elements and when blown, it produces the sound "Om" from which all of creation arose.

On either side of the guardians that protect the stairs leading to the central shrine are bells which hang from stone frames. The bells are rung during times of ritual and by devotees as they offer their prayers. The sound is said to be pleasing to Vishnu and it fills him with power. To avoid aggravating Vishnu



Manadeva Pillar



#### Kurma - Tortoise

The Sankhu pillar stands on top of a **turtle**. A similar composition is found often within the Kathmandu Valley and refers to **Kurma**, one of the avatars or incarnations of Vishnu.

Legend has it that while the Gods and Demons were competing to obtain the amrita (see page 49)

during the churning of the Sea of Milk, the Demons were gaining the upper hand. At that point, the Mandara mountain, which served as the churning pole, began to crumble. Fearing defeat, the Gods asked Vishnu for help. Vishnu, in the form of a tortoise, took his position at the base of the mountain and thus ensured that the Gods won the battle and obtained the elixir of life (amrita).

The story teaches that one who wants to win, needs a strong base and the turtle Kurma symbolically represents this base. In the Valley it is still a tradition for those who are building a new house, to start by placing a golden turtle image under the first brick.

the bells should not be rung unless you have at least a flower, or a prayer to offer.

Over time the temple, which is one of the largest Pagoda-style buildings in the Valley, has been embellished with photographs and mirrors that have been left by devotees. The images are of gods, kings or the visitors themselves and serve to associate the person depicted with Vishnu. It is said that if a person with failing eyesight places a mirror on a temple so that people can see it, the donor's eyesight will grow strong once more.

The stone statue of a kneeling Garuda located in front of the main door of the temple is considered to be one of the most important sculptures in the Kathmandu Valley.

A naga (snake) is wrapped around its neck which invokes the legend of **Garuda and Takshaka**. It is said that many years ago Garuda and the naga Takshaka broke into a fight. The battle turned out to be ferocious and evenly matched. It waged for many days and in desperation Garuda turned to Vishnu for help. When the bird-king with Vishnu's help was about to triumph, Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, intervened, calmed the adversaries and brought peace to them. The Bodhisattva draped the serpent around Garuda's neck and Vishnu, who was ashamed because he had initially helped Garuda, offered to be Avalokitesvara's mount. Vishnu carried him on his back and took him to Changu where the Bodhisattva came to be known as Hari Hara Vahan Lokeswara. Buddhists identify



Changu Narayan with the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara.

The monumental winged Garuda figure is depicted in the usual way, with sprouting wings and clawed feet but the naturalistic rendering of the face has prompted many to assume that this is a portrait of King Manadeva himself.

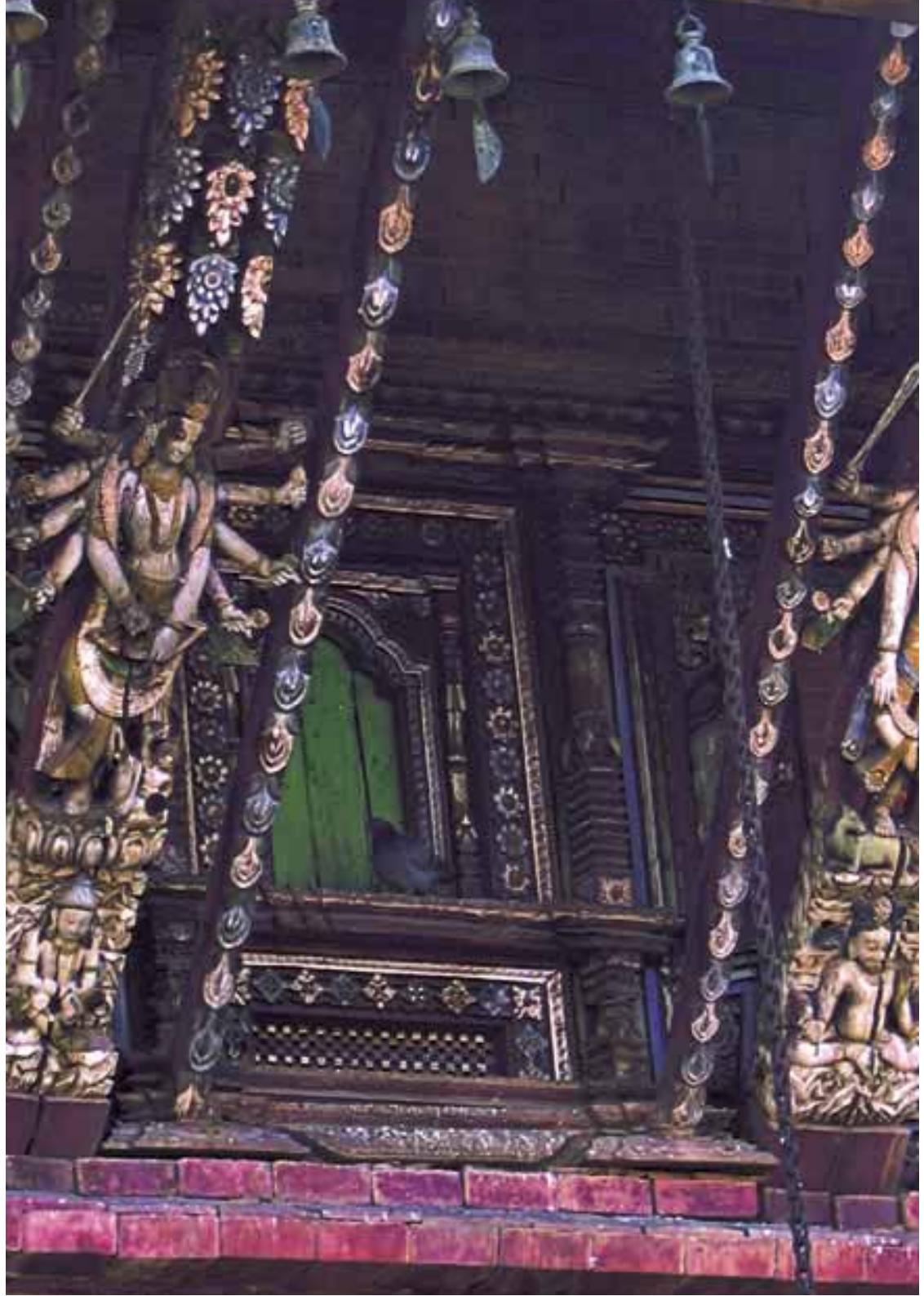
Next to the Garuda statue, facing the temple's main entrance, there are two gilded statues locked in a cage-like structure. These are the images of



King Bhupatindra Malla & Queen

**Bhaktapur's King Bhupatindra Malla and his queen.** Their metal cage is merely a protection against looting.

Like many other important temples in the Valley, the Narayan temple in Changu also received generous donations from different royals. King Bhupatindra ruled the city-state of Bhaktapur in the late 17th and early 18th century. He was responsible for the most recent reconstruction of the temple in 1702, after the previous structure had been ruined by fire.





## RITUAL AT CHANGU NARAYAN

There are two major types of ritual at Changu Narayan: **nitya** (daily rites) and **naimittika** (rites offered on special occasions). The majority of religious activities follow this traditional pattern, except from the worship at the **Chinnamasta Temple** which follows a tantric doctrine. For this purpose only a tantric priest lives in the complex.

The priests or **pujari** of the Changu Narayan Temple are charged with ensuring that the home of the gods is cared for, and that the appropriate



rites are performed at the correct time. They are assisted by the families of **bhandels** who act as general caretakers of the complex, and who hand over responsibility each month. During his time in charge, a bhandel must not leave the compound or cross the Manohara River without shaving his head, cutting his nails and changing into a ritual white doti (cloth). The new bhandel arrives on the 12th day of every lunar month (waxing moon). At that time the sacred jewelry is handed over to him by the previous bhandel in the presence of the head priest and a number of officials.

The **Brahmans** of the temple are responsible for the worshipping of the sacred image in each shrine in the complex. The priest in charge of the main temple is the most senior and lives in a room in the outer walls of the complex. It is believed that the priest is a direct descendant of the famous Brahman who unwittingly beheaded Vishnu and that his family has occupied the role of chief priest ever since.

### Nitya Puja

Early every morning the bhandel removes the jewelry and metal cover of the Changu Narayan image. The priest purifies his body, then enters the temple with a vessel of water from the hiti (water spout) below the temple. Before cleansing the image the priest removes the golden head, thus re-enacting the moment when Vishnu was relieved of his sins by being beheaded. The priest then bathes the image with water, milk and then the panchamrita: milk, yoghurt, sugar, butter and honey.

Only after this purifying ritual is the head replaced and Changu Narayan is resurrected. At this stage a paste of sandalwood is applied to the whole image whilst musicians play in the courtyard. Flowers are offered to symbolise ether and incense is burned to represent air. Lamps are lit to invoke the element fire and Vishnu is fed with sweet delicacies that come from the earth. Thus, in conjunction with the earlier bathing, all 5 elements have been offered.

On completion of the purification puja of the main image, the priest visits all the lesser shrines, sprinkling them with the water used for bathing the central image. The shrine is then circumambulated three times before the final drops of water are offered to the kneeling statue of Garuda at the west door. This final offering emphasizes the importance of the Garuda in the context of Changu Narayan.

### Naimittika Puja

Every Wednesday the chief priest prepares a large vat of khir (sweetened milk rice) which is then fed to the deity. The bhandel precedes the priest on the journey to the temple sprinkling holy water to ensure the khir is not contaminated en route. Once the deity has been fed, the food is offered to the caretakers of the temple who take it as a blessing from Vishnu.

The complex of Changu Narayan also hosts numerous festivals and celebrations throughout the year, some of which are detailed in the festivals section of this booklet (see page 73).



Laxmi Narayan & Kileswar Temple

# BUILDINGS AROUND THE TEMPLE

Amatya Sattal

The courtyard is encircled by numerous rest-houses that continue to function today. Barring a few examples, most of these were constructed by members of the royal families or by other prominent figures.

## Conservation and Maintenance

One of the rest houses, the Amatya Sattal or Chaughera Sattal, was recently restored by the Department of Archaeology. The renovation did not change the traditional look of the 300-year-old sattal. The reconstructed section is located in the middle of the southern side of the courtyard.

Traditionally the temple complex was maintained by a local guthi. The guthi is a social organisation which owned a lot of land surrounding the village of Changu Narayan and the income from that land was used to ensure regular maintenance of the temple and the temple compound. Today, however, the guthi system no longer officially exists and their properties have been annexed by the government. Therefore, the traditional community-based maintenance system has largely disappeared. For larger works, the Department of Archaeology provides help, but smaller, regular maintenance activities are still carried out by the local people.





Ganesh Shrine

Chinnamasta Temple

Badeshwar Mahadevi Temple

The south-eastern corner of the courtyard houses a small **Ganesh** shrine.

A little closer to the central temple stands the 17th century **Chinnamasta Temple**. The deity of this gilded shrine is the beheaded Parvati (Chinnamasta) who cut off her own head to feed her friends. The single-storied temple has a gilded roof and entrance. The remaining part of the building is covered with colourful ceramic tiles.

The Chinnamasta temple is also associated with the mother goddess Harati, and is said to contain 12 images of female deities. Harati or Ajima is very much worshipped throughout the Kathmandu Valley and is believed to protect children.

It is unusual to have Chinnamasta depicted in a Vaishnavite complex as she is commonly related to Shiva. However, the parallels between the decapitated Vishnu and the headless goddess are clear.

To the west of the Chinnamasta temple is the temple of **Badeshwar Mahadevi**. This is a simple white-washed shrine in shikhara style. Through the lattice windows one can spot a Shiva lingam.

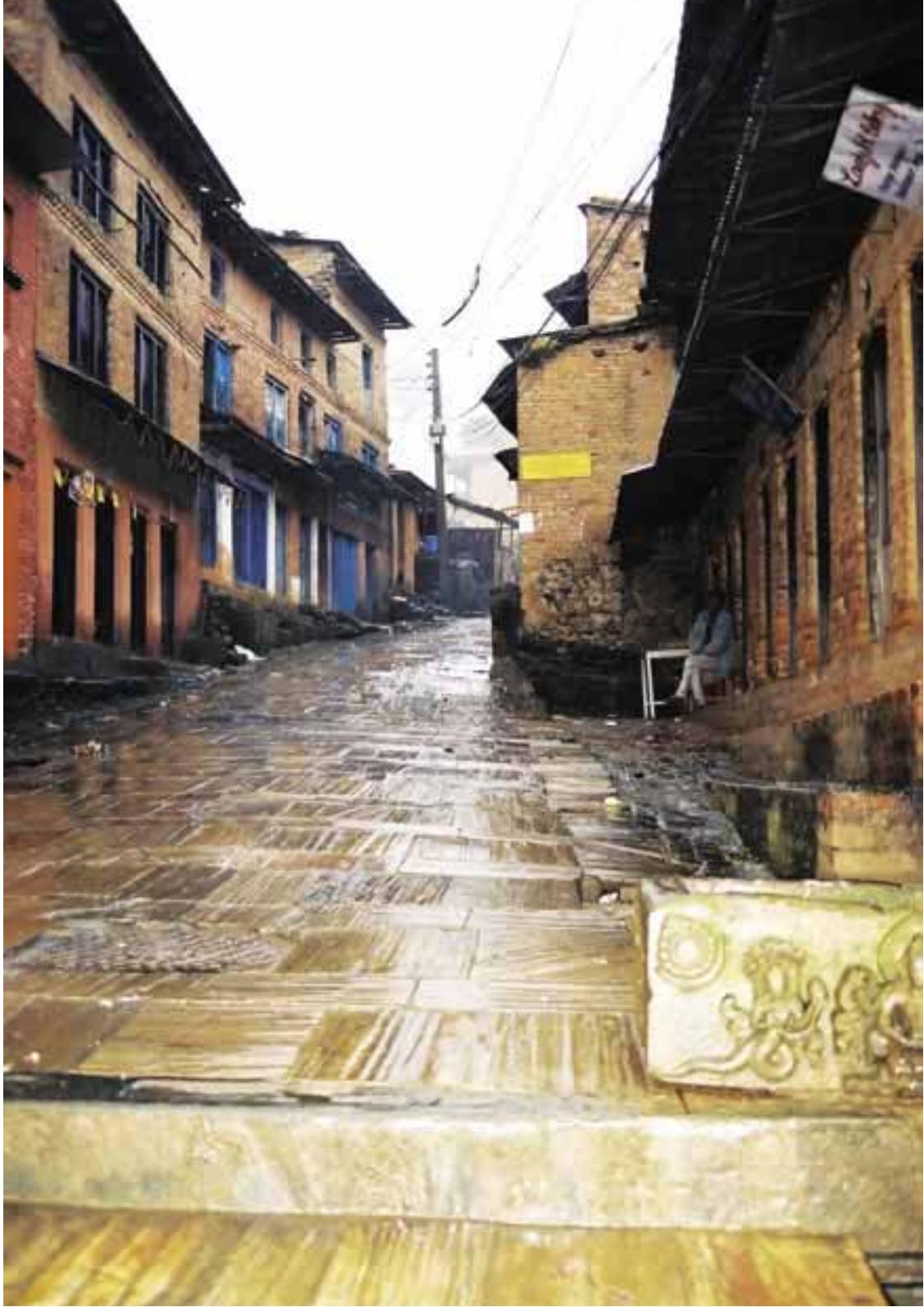
Kileswar Temple



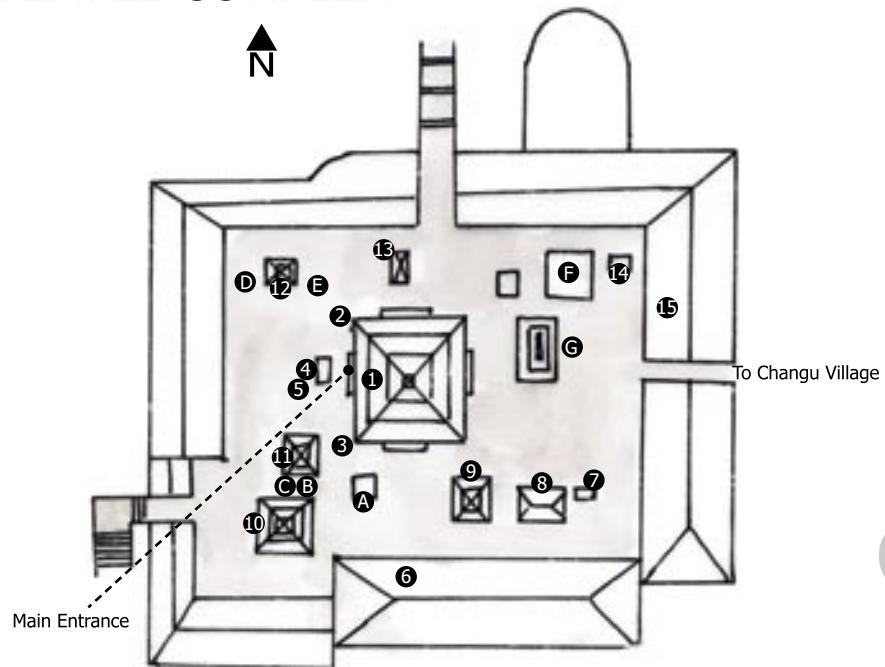
Tucked away in the northwest corner of the courtyard, just before turning towards the main entrance, are two small brick temples. These are the Laxmi Narayan and the Kileshwar Temples.

The small **Laxmi Narayan Temple** houses a central shrine dedicated to Vishnu and his consort Laxmi, the goddess of wealth. There is a circumambulatory passage around the main shrine.

Next is the small **Kileshwar** or 'Pashupati' Temple. The temple is dedicated to Shiva as Lord Pashupati. It has some marvellous carved wooden elements, including a number of erotic images on the lower struts of the two tiered roof. The Kileshwar Temple houses a **Chaturmukha Lingam**, a Shiva lingam with humanoid faces looking towards the four cardinal directions and one on the apex. This is the only Shaivite shrine in the Changunarayan temple complex.



## CHANGU NARAYAN TEMPLE COMPLEX



Key	1. Changu Narayan Temple	Sculpture	A Vishnu Vaikuntha & Vishnu Vishwarup
2.	Manadeva Pillar	B Vishnu Vikranta	
3.	Sankha Pillar	C Narasingh	
4.	Garuda	D Garuda Narayan	
5.	King Bhupatindra Malla & Queen	E Sridhara Vishnu	
6.	Amatya Sattal	F Maha Vishnu	
7.	Ganesh Shrine	G Avalokitesvara	
8.	Chinnamasta Temple		
9.	Badeshwari Mahadevi Temple		
10.	Laxmi Narayan Temple		
11.	Kileswar Temple		
12.	Krishna Temple		
13.	Nriteshwari Temple		
14.	Mahadev Temple		
15.	Sattal with Chariots		



## SCULPTURAL ART OF CHANGU NARAYAN

The temple of Changu Narayan is a beautiful example of indigenous Kathmandu Valley architecture, but it is for the remarkable and rare sculptures that are found in the courtyard that the complex is best known. Many of these works of art date from the Licchavi period and together with the Manadeva Inscription, they provide a rich source for interpretation of not only the temple, but of the history and culture of the Kathmandu Valley. The combination of metal work and wood carving on the temple itself, the stone sculptures dating from the 2nd century AD through to the 19th century and the daily rituals create a unique living museum.

The tradition of worshipping Vishnu in the Kathmandu Valley goes back to a pre-Licchavi period. Whilst Shaivism was also very popular during the Licchavi period, it is clear through studying the inscriptions of the valley that a number of prominent Licchavi and Malla kings were keen patrons of Vaishnavite art. Thus royal patronage played an important role in the artistic development of Vaishnavite iconography in the context of the Valley.

There are over 14 individual stone images in the complex, and other than the image in the temple itself, they are all free-standing and easily accessible for both worshippers and visitors.

Shrine





## VISHNU ICONOGRAPHY

Vishnu, the Protector, dwells in his realm called Vaikuntha (heaven). He rests in peace on the cushion of the divine serpent, Shesha Naga, with his consort, Laxmi, the goddess of wealth, who helps him fall asleep by stroking his feet. The divine serpent floats on the primordial Sea of Milk. Sometimes a lotus is seen emerging from the navel of Vishnu upon which the creator, Brahma, is seated. This relates to the mythological origin of Brahma.

Vishnu acts as a protector of dharma (order and virtue) and dharma-tmas (the virtuous) across different ages. The 10 incarnations (Avatars) of Vishnu, as described in the Vishnu Purana, are the different forms that Vishnu took to accomplish his 'rescue missions'. Vishnu is revered as having the most graceful and divine attributes. He has a dark complexion, which is generally portrayed in pictures as a bluish tinge. This complexion is inherited by Ram and Krishna, the two human incarnations of Vishnu. A 'U'-shaped tilak features on his forehead.

Vishnu is generally seen with four arms, holding four of his distinct **accessories**: a conch (sankha),

a discus (chakra), a club (gada) and a lotus (padma). The conch represents the sky, the discus the air, the club the light and the lotus the waters.

Sometimes we find other abstractions of Vishnu's forms, for example with more than four arms and more than one face (in which case the other faces are related to other incarnations).

Vishnu is generally pictured seated on **Garuda** (divine bird-man figure), his constant escort. (see page 6)

The images of Vishnu are endowed with different names. Sometimes, Vishnu is represented alone, with his usual accessories, sometimes with his consort Laxmi and often within one of his incarnations. Occasionally Vishnu's name is associated with plants or trees:

#### **Vishnu alone:**

Narayan, Shesha Narayan, Sankasta Narayan

#### **Vishnu with Laxmi:**

Laxmi Narayan, Sridhar Vishnu,

#### **Vishnu with Garuda:**

Garuda Narayan, Garudasan Vishnu

#### **Mythological associations:**

Vishnu Vishvarupa (association with Krishna Avatar) Vishnu Vikranta (association with Vaman Avatar)

Narasingh (association with Narasingh Avatar)

#### **Plant associations:**

Changu Narayan (association with Champaca tree), Tulsi Narayan (association with Tulsi Plant)

**Vishnu, the protector,** watches over the world and is ready to step in whenever humanity gets in trouble. When he descends to earth on one of his rescue missions, he does so in the

form of an incarnation or avatar. It is believed that Vishnu has already saved the world 9 times, in 9 different forms and that the 10th avatar is yet to come. The 10 avatars of Vishnu are:

#### **1. Matsya (Fish)**

Vishnu descended in the form of a fish to save Manu, the progenitor of the new human race, and Seven Divine Rishis during the Great Flood that devastated the world.

#### **2. Kurma (Tortoise)**

During the churning of the Sea of Milk Vishnu became a tortoise to support the mountain Mandara, which was used as the churning rod and to prevent it from crumbling. Thereby the gods were able to obtain the divine immortality elixir, amrita. (see page 25)

#### **3. Varaha (Boar)**

Vishnu appeared in the form of a boar to save the world from the clutches of the demon Hiranyaksha who had taken it to the fathomless depths of the ocean. Varaha appeared from the mouth of Brahma and turned into a huge boar with a hundred arms. With his snout he raised the earth from the bottom of the ocean.

#### **4. Narasingh (Man-lion)**

Narasingh is a half-man half-lion incarnation (neither man nor beast). In this incarnation, Vishnu killed a demon at twilight (neither day nor night) at the entrance of the palace (neither in- nor outside) by tearing out his entrails with his claws (neither striking nor shooting) while seated on Narasingh's lap (neither on the ground nor in the air). (see page 60)

#### **5. Vamana (Dwarf)**

To save Indra's kingdom when it was threatened by the excessive virtue of Bali, the grandson of Prahlad, Vishnu took on his fifth incarnation. (see page 58)

#### **6. Parasurama**

Vishnu as Parasurama was born for the sole purpose of exterminating the Kshatriya (warrior caste) who were suppressing the Brahmins (priest caste). Parasurama or Ram with the axe defeated the entire warrior caste and donated all his wealth to the Brahmins.

#### **7. Ram**

Ram, or the charming one, is the hero of the Hindu epic 'Ramayana'. Ram is the embodiment of the perfect man and ruler. Vishnu incarnated as Ram to stop the increase of demonic activities. Ram was born as a prince, but he was exiled to the forest for fourteen years. During his exile he was accompanied by his brother Laxman and his wife Sita. When Sita was abducted by the demon king Ravana, Ram, together with a divine army of incarnated monkeys and bears (including Hanuman), went to her rescue. His mission ended with the killing of the demon, after which Ram returned to his kingdom to establish a golden rule of justice and happiness.

#### **8. Krishna**

Always crowned with a peacock feather and holding a flute, Krishna has varied manifestations – as Balkrishna (the eternal child), as the eternal lover (teacher of Bhaktiyoga), and as the teacher of Karmayoga or human duties. The story of Krishna is described in the Hindu epic 'Mahabharata', where he is born as the son of a nobleman,

but raised among cowherds. As the eternal child, Krishna is cherished for his childish pranks; as the divine lover he is remembered for his dalliances with the milkmaids and as the teacher of human duties he is revered for his discourse with Arjun in the Bhavadgita. In this most famous part of the Mahabharata, Vishnu in the form of Krishna lectures Arjun about the importance of fulfilling one's duty within a spirit of devotion to the cause.

#### **9. Buddha**

In his ninth incarnation, Vishnu takes on the form of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion.

#### **10. Kalki (Horse)**

It is believed that Vishnu, in the form of a horse, will descend upon the earth at the end of the present era. Kalki will destroy all evil, dispel darkness and once again announce the arrival of the Golden Age.



# GARUDA NARAYAN RELIEF & SRIDHARA VISHNU



Sridhara Vishnu

The **Garuda Narayan** image stands next to the Krishna Shrine in the north-west corner of the courtyard. The relief has been alternatively dated to the 8th and the 12th centuries AD and is believed to be a copy of the enshrined image of Changu Narayan. The relief depicts Vishnu seated on Garuda as they are about to fly to Vaikuntha (heaven). This image is well known as it features on the 10-rupee note.

To the other side of the Krishna Shrine stands the **Sridhara Vishnu** relief, a brilliant work of the 9th-10th century AD. A standing Vishnu is flanked by his consort Laxmi to his right and his mount Garuda to his left. Sridhara Vishnu is one of the names of Vishnu that occurs in the Mahabharata epic. Sridhara Vishnu is praised as the Supreme God and is believed to protect devotees against the problems of everyday life.



## VISHNU VAIKUNTHA

One of the most celebrated reliefs in Nepal is located in the south-west corner of the courtyard. The 19th century **Vishnu Vaikuntha** faces east and depicts the god's tantric aspect. Vishnu is shown with 14 arms and 7 heads representing the 7 chakras (psychic centers within the body). Laxmi sits on his knee, providing him with the essential female energy or Shakti. The whole image conveys a sense of Vishnu in his supreme form.

### Vaikuntha

Vaikuntha is paradise or heaven for Vishnu and is described in the **Bhagavadgita**, a part of the Mahabharata epic which features the Krishna-incarnation of Vishnu delivering a sermon about the cycle of incarnations which can only be stopped by fulfilling ones duties:

"The ladies in the Vaikhunta are as beautiful as the goddess of fortune herself; Such transcendently beautiful ladies, their hands playing with lotuses and their leg bangles tinkling, are sometimes seen sweeping the marble walls, which are bedecked at intervals with golden borders, in order to receive the grace of the Supreme Personality or Head of Gods.

The goddesses of fortune worship the Lord in their own gardens by offering tulsi leaves on the coral-paved banks of transcendental reservoirs of water. While offering worship to the Lord, they can see on the water the reflection of their beautiful faces with raised noses, and it appears that they have become more beautiful because of the lord kissing their faces."



Vishnu Vaikuntha

## VISHNU VISHWARUP

The Vishnu Vishwarup (Vishnu of the Universal Form) is a partly broken 9th century stele work from the Licchavi period which stands south of the temple. The relief depicts a scene from the **Bhagavadgita** in which Krishna manifests his universal form to an awe-struck Arjun. Vishnu stands firmly in the center of the composition and the figure has ten heads and ten arms with his feet in the netherworlds. It is a remarkable example of Hindu imagery, with the lower portion showing Vishnu reclining on the snake Shesha in the ocean of existence.



Vishnu Vishwarup

## Bhagavadgita

The Bhagavadgita or 'Song of the Blessed One' is one of the three fundamental texts of the Hindu faith and forms one episode in India's Great Epic, the Mahabharata. It centers upon the moral dilemma faced by Arjun as he prepares to go into battle against his own relatives. He engages in a philosophical dialogue with Vishnu in the form of Krishna, who teaches him about the nature of Karma Yoga: to execute one's duty responsibly without focusing on the results as the only way to break the circle of rebirths and to attain a place in heaven.

# VISHNU VIKRANTA

The **Vishnu Vikranta** sculpture (also known as Tribikram Vishnu) is a rare 8th century figure of Vamana, the dwarf incarnation of Vishnu, who claimed heaven, hell and earth in three gigantic strides. The relief is set into the lower reaches of the Laxmi Narayan Temple.

Vishnu's incarnation as Vamana was a popular symbol of wisdom in ancient Nepal and is shown mid-stride in this dynamic relief. The all-conquering avatar may have been installed at the Changu site to honour a royal victory over surrounding lands- a natural choice for a monarch dedicated to Vishnu.



Vishnu Vikranta

## Vamana

Vamana is Vishnu's fifth incarnation. During this time Bali had become king. Bali was a benevolent ruler and was well loved by all his subjects. The gods were happy with him because he did anything to honour them. However, Bali's overpowering ambition became a cause for increasing concern. He had already extended his kingdom as far as he could on earth and now turned towards the kingdom of the gods.

Indra was troubled and sought the advice of the great sage Brihaspati. Brihaspati predicted that the powers Bali had gained through honouring the gods would eventually become too powerful for Indra, and that the god-king would lose his kingdom. The prophecy came true and the gods were evicted from the heavens. In the same fashion, Bali conquered hell and ousted the resident demons. The gods were very concerned and consulted amongst themselves. It was decided that Vishnu would descend to earth as the son of the sage Kasyapa. The child grew up to be Vamana, the dwarf, the fifth incarnation of Vishnu.

Vamana had heard of Bali's generosity and he visited the great king. The dwarf asked for three paces of land on which to meditate. Bali was surprised at the humble request and immediately granted the diminutive figure three paces of land. No sooner had the gift been granted than Vamana grew to an enormous size and became **Tribikrama** (the gigantic form). With two steps Vamana covered heaven and earth. Indra was restored to his throne and the gods returned to their kingdom. Since there were no more lands to conquer, the humbled Bali asked Vamana to place the third step on his head. Pleased by this sacrifice, Vamana presented Bali with the nether worlds.



Narasingh

## NARASINGH RELIEF

In the south-west corner of the courtyard, by the Laxmi Narayan Temple is the **Narasingh sculpture**. The 12th century relief depicts Vishnu's fourth incarnation disemboweling the demon **Hiranyakasipu**.

This myth that may have inspired the 'immortality' of Macbeth in the West, is a popular source of imagery in the Kathmandu Valley. There are many

attendant figures beside the main figure of Narasingh, which is thought to be one of the earliest representations of this avatar in the Valley. Garuda and Laxmi stand to the right, with Hiranyakasipu's son Pralhad to the left. The figures of Brahma, Indra and Shiva watch from the heavens, whilst two nagas survey the scene from the underworld below.

### Narasingh

The legend of Narasingh narrates how Vishnu took on the man-lion form (Narasingh) in order to kill the demon Hiranyakasipu.

The demon had obtained a gift from Brahma that made him invincible as he could neither be killed by man nor beast, neither during the day nor at night, neither inside a house nor outside and no weapon could wound or injure him.

Hiranyakasipu had a son, Pralhad, who worshipped Vishnu and the demon was enraged at his son's devotion. When he questioned Pralhad about his God's abilities Vishnu burst on to the scene in his half-man and half-lion incarnation. It was twilight (neither day nor night) and Narasingh (neither man nor beast), seizing the opportunity, grasped Hiranyakasipu and split his belly open with his claws (not using any weapon), whilst sitting on the threshold of the demon's palace (neither inside nor outside).



## STONE SCULPTURE IN A LIVING HERITAGE SITE

The stone sculptures of Changu Narayan are some of the oldest and finest in the Kathmandu Valley. They are famous not only for their delicate workmanship but also because of their religious importance. The Changu Narayan temple complex houses some of the finest pieces of sculptural stonework in Nepal, but this is also a living heritage site where the sculptures represent 'gods' that receive



daily offerings. Both the images and the religious values need to be protected.

Two different types of stone have been used for the sculptural work at Changu Narayan. The smaller sculptures at the main temple and those embedded in the small shrines throughout the courtyard are made of the so called 'Blackstone', a black limestone which is easy to carve and therefore preferable for fine and detailed carvings. The bigger sculptural panels depicting Vishnu in his various incarnations at the four outer walls of the temple, the steles and the free-standing statue of Garuda in front of the entrance have been executed in sandstone.

Changu Narayan is a place where fine artwork interacts with religious use. The conservation issues are complex when trying to protect the values attached to the site. The conservation needs of the stone sculptures, (the tangible physical evidence of the heritage) compete with the preservation of the intangible living heritage aspects or the religious performance. The reliefs are among the most important sculptural art preserved in Nepal. Not only can they be dated back to the Licchavi period, the works are also of a superior workmanship and refinement. However, these reliefs are left outside on the courtyard, without any means of protection, because the local community valorizes them in a different way. Aside from their artistic and historic value, these images are 'gods'.

The sculptures are subject to everyday worship which involves the rubbing of tika powder, the application of milk and yogurt, and the burning of butter and oil lamps directly in front of them.

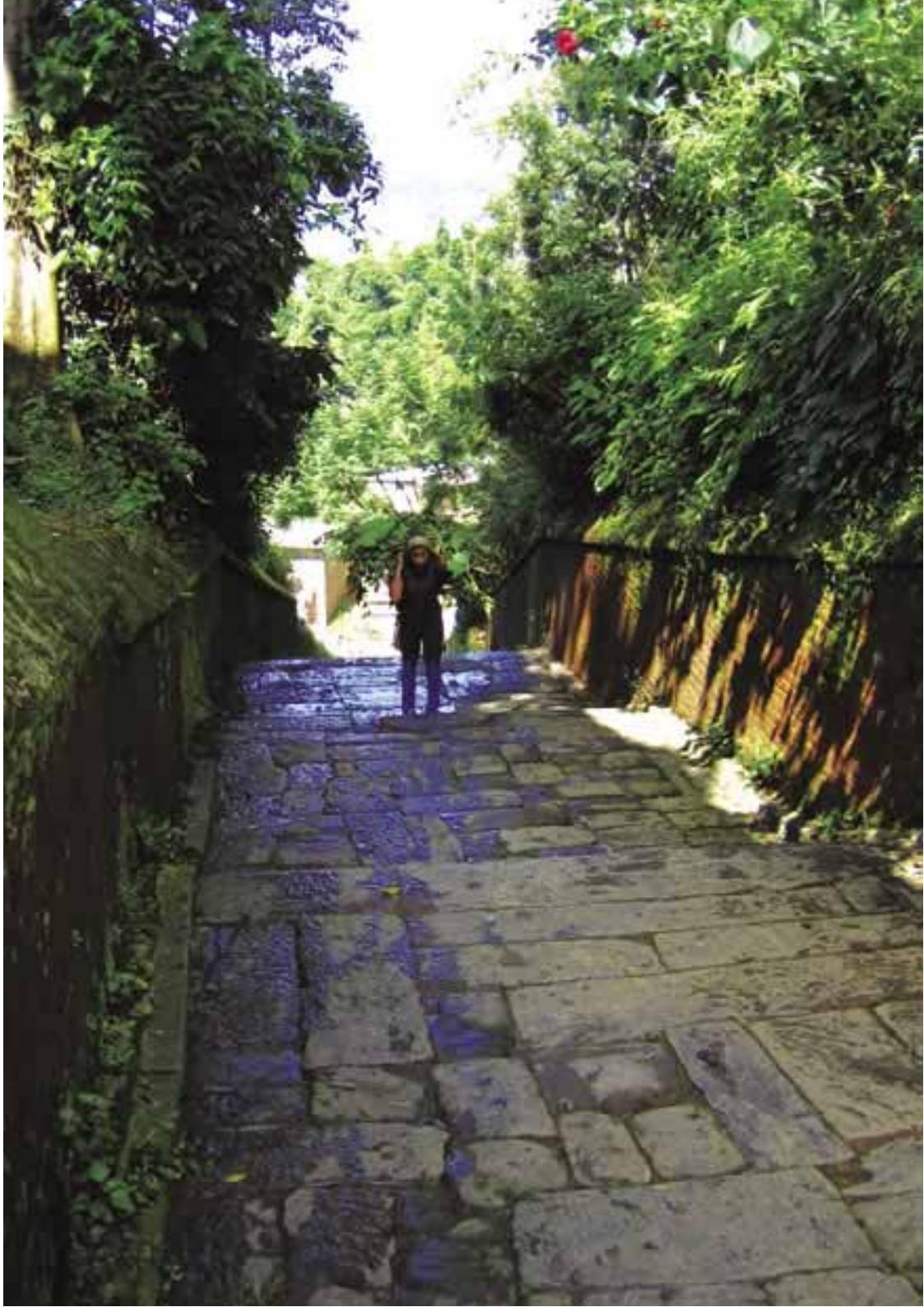
This has caused an accelerated deterioration of the stone, which has led to a loss of detail of the fine workmanship due to black encrustations and flaking of the surface. In particular, the sandstone sculptures are subject to this sort of decay. The sculptures made from 'Blackstone' are more resistant to this daily use.

**How should such a site be approached?** To best conserve the material, which transmits information about ancient times, conservation treatments, both active and preventive, are necessary. Maybe the ancient carvings should even be relocated to a museum, and be replaced with modern versions? How would this affect the religious and spiritual significance of the site? Or should the sculptures remain behind protective screens? This would certainly harm the living character of Changu Narayan, and affect the ability of devotees to perform religious rites.

What is more important here: preserving the sculptures as tangible remains from the past or preserving their intangible value and leaving them to be used by daily worshippers, which is what they were meant for in the first place, but with the risk of losing them?







## NATURAL SETTING

by Manindra Shrestha

The main shrine of Changu Narayan has been known by different names throughout history. In the Lichhavi era the shrine was known as Dolashikharwami, and it was not until the reign of the Newar Malla Kings that the shrine was given its present name of **Changu Narayan**. In Newari Language Cha means the tree of champaca (*Michelia champaca*) and Gu refers to the forest. The temples location amidst a forest of champaca trees was clearly deeply significant.

The fragrant white, yellow, or orange flowers of champaca (champa) are used in religious ceremonies. Champaca belongs to the magnolia family and is an evergreen tree native to the Himalayan region where it grows at elevations of up to 2440 meters (8005 ft). The champaca tree is the tree in which Vishnu resided according to the legend of the founding of the Changu Narayan temple (see page 7).

Unfortunately we find only a minimal number of such trees in the vicinity of Changu Narayan today, and most of the vegetation on the hilltop is now of the pine species.

Possible explanations for the loss of champaca on the Changu hill are that they are very sensitive to fire and it is known that several fires destroyed the temple in the Malla period.

The hill is now full of pines instead of the original Champaca. Although preserving the green character of the site, the pines have dehydrated the soil and prevent alternative species from taking root. Furthermore, the dry soil is now much more vulnerable for landslides, which often occur during the monsoon.

# FESTIVALS

by Shanti Mishra

Nepal is known to foreigners as a land of fascinating festivals, and rightly so as the Nepalese celebrate more festivals than there are days in a year. They are celebrated according to the lunar calendar and therefore do not occur on the same date from year to year and every full moon day (the 15th day of the lunar month) has special significance. The lifestyle of the Nepali people is uniquely interwoven with religious culture and rituals and entertainment is provided by the numerous festivals. They are not merely spectacles but a celebration of the glorious cultural heritage. Festivals unite people of diverse cultural backgrounds and faiths into one nation. Besides Gods and Goddesses, the worshipping during some festivals is in honour of the earth, sun, moon, parents, brothers, cows, snakes, dogs, rivers, plants, tools, weapons - practically everything!



Some festivals such as Dasain and Tihar are celebrated throughout the country. Some are celebrated only in the cities. These include Indra Jatra in Kathmandu, Rato Machhendranath Jatra in Patan and Bisket Jatra in Bhaktapur. Some are celebrated only in one village; Hari Shankar Jatra in Pharping, Adinath jatra in Chobhar and Maha-Laxmi Jatra in Thankot. The festivals which occur in Changu Narayan are:



Name	Month of Celebration
Narayan, Mahadeva and Chhinnamasta Jatra	Baisakh (Apr/May)
Kalash Jatra	Shrawan (Jul/Aug)
Kusmanda Nawami	Kartik (Oct/Nov)
Haribodhani Ekadashi	Kartik (Oct/Nov)
Mahasnan	Mangshir (Nov/Dec)
Banshagopal Jatra	Falgun (Feb/Mar)

### **Narayan, Mahadeva and Chhinnamasta Jatra (Baisakh/April-May)**

This festival is observed on Matatirtha Ausi (Mother's day) which falls on the 15th day of the waning moon of Baisakh. On this occasion, the above mentioned gods are enshrined on a khat (palanquin) and are carried through different localities. The festival lasts for five days. On the second day, gods and goddesses made of sticky rice are carried to the Bhairava temple. It is a spectacular and unique part of the festival which is celebrated throughout the ancient Changu Narayan area including the Bhadrabas, Danchhi, and Indrayani villages.

### **Kalash Jatra (Shrawan/July-August)**

This festival is held on dwadasi day, three days before Janai Purnima (full moon) in the month of Shrawan and on full moon day of Poush. Early in the morning, the kalash – a carved silver water vase representing the Changu Narayan - is carried to the Hanuman Dhoka Palace in Kathmandu's Durbar Square in a procession accompanied by classical musical instruments and traditional Guruju Paltan (traditional army units). The living goddess Kumari cheerfully observes the religious ceremonies, which are conducted by the light of flaming torches. At the end, the gate to the Taleju Temple opens and the Changu Narayan is taken inside. Guns boom in salute and at around five in the evening the Kumari is carried back to her house. All rituals are performed by the authorized priests inside the Hanuman Dhoka courtyard. According to the folklore, Changu

Narayan planned to leave for Benares, India but he cancelled his visit after seeing black earthen pots being smashed by children on the day that he was planning to leave. He considered this a bad omen and went back to his temple in the early morning to protect the people of the Kathmandu Valley.

### **Kusmanda Nawami (Kartik – October/November)**

The month of Kartik is auspicious as it marks the return of Vishnu, the redeemer and preserver, after a four-month retreat. Hundreds of devotees visit the Changu Narayan temple on Kusmanda Nawami (9th day of bright Kartik) and Haribodhini Ekadashi (11th day of bright Kartik) to offer a special puja. Similar melas are held in this temple on the day of Nagapanchami, Krishnastami, and Teej.

### **Mahasnan (Mangshir – November/December)**

Mahasnan occurs on the 12th day of the waxing moon of Dhannya Purnima, in the month of Mangshir. During this festival, the Changu Narayan image is bathed with panchamrit (honey, liquid butter, sugar, milk and curd). After this bath, a grand feast is organized, during which a huge amount of rice, cereals, and beans is consumed. Bhoj (sacrifice of animals) is performed in honour of Changu Narayan. A large number of people of all ages gather to witness the spectacle.

### **Banshagopaljatra (Falgun – February/March)**

Banshagopaljatra is celebrated on the day of Fagu Purnima (full moon). Krishna, the great hero of the Mahabharata is also known as Banshagopal. On this day Krishna as Banshagopal is celebrated and carried around in a small ratha (chariot) which is considered smallest of the Nepali Rathas.



## HINDUISM

Hinduism does not have a single founder, a specific theological system or a central religious organisation. It consists of multiple different religious groups and practices that have evolved over the last five millennia. As such, it is a complex religion to define, and can best be summed up as a way of life based on teachings of ancient sages and scriptures like the Vedas and the Upanishads.





The spectrum of philosophies and approaches to a common pantheon of deities is wide: there is no definitive creed or set of practices. No single body has the right to define belief or establish official practice. There are, however, spiritual leaders and philosophers who are widely revered and there is a large cannon of sacred literature. For the outsider the number of gods and manifestations can be baffling, but Hinduism is essentially monotheistic with the multiple deities personifying attributes of a single, supreme God. In essence the diverse approaches to Hinduism are tied together by the belief that everything is connected.

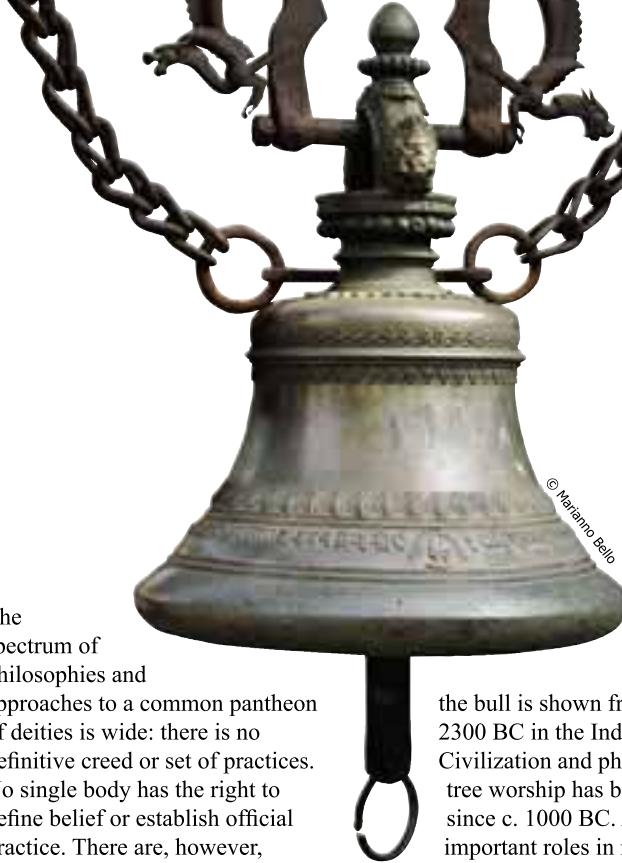
### Origins

Unlike Christianity or Judaism and Islam, Hinduism does not date from a specific historical event. Its earliest origins probably began in animism, or the belief that natural phenomena and objects have souls, and in totemism or veneration of objects and symbols. The

worship of the mother goddess and the bull is shown from around 2300 BC in the Indus Valley Civilization and phallus and peepul tree worship has been widespread since c. 1000 BC. All play important roles in modern Hindu worship.

### Vedas

The Vedic Age (1200-800 BC) was a period of growth and change, and produced the Sanskrit texts that provide many of the Hindu religious ideals. The four Vedas are **Rig**, **Yajur**, **Sama** and **Atharva**. They are believed to have divine origins and were passed down orally. They consist mainly of hymns which were chanted during rituals and are concerned more with practice than devotion. The **Rig Veda** is the first and most important of the four, probably dating from 1500 BC and attaining its final form c. 900 BC. It consists of over 1,000 sacrificial hymns, chants and legends and the earliest reference to **Vishnu**, although he is a minor deity



© Marianno Belli

here, **Indra** as the god of rain, **Rudra**, who later becomes **Shiva** and **Agni**, the god of fire. The **Pursha Shukta** tells the tale of the primeval man who survived his sacrifice and created the four social classes, the first reference to a **caste system**. The process of sacrifice gained in popularity from c.900 BC and was believed to recreate the original sacrifice in the Pursha Shukta.

**Brahmans** place particular emphasis on procedures, elaborate ritual, sacrifice and caste. They date from 600 BC. The **Upanishads** place more emphasis on the unity of the individual soul with the Universal



### Hindu Practice

#### Darshana

Darshana describes the 'vision' of the deity that worshippers hope to gain when they visit a temple or a shrine. It also refers to religious insight gained through prayer.

#### 4 Human Goals

**Artha** is the pursuit of material gains through legal means, **kama** the satisfaction of desires, **dharma** performing ones duty according to position, **moksha** the ultimate goal of attaining liberation from the cycle of rebirth.

#### Dharma

The Mahabharata defines 10 embodiments of dharma that represent the order inherent in human life, maintained by ones duty. One's duties depend on age, position and caste. Respect for elders is considered important and many consider marriage as a son's religious duty. Three levels of order are required; one at a spiritual level with the universe, a second that requires order in society and revolves around the caste system and a third which requires order of the individual by obedience to a moral code.

#### Karma

The effect of former actions, which is central to achieving liberation from the cycle of life.

#### Ahimsa

The doctrine of non-violence.

#### Rebirth

The never-ending cycle of rebirth and the transmigration of souls.

#### Cremation

In Hindu philosophy, it is believed that the human body is formed out of the union of five divine elements: air, water, fire, earth and sky. After death each of the elements must return to their respective realms to be reunited again to generate another life form, thus perpetuating the cycle of life. It is by cremating that these elements are able to revert to their realms.



Soul. The Upanishads propagated the use of the word Om, which represents supreme consciousness. The **Mahapuranas** are 18 writings that contain interpretations of the creation of the universe, its history, destruction and recreation, the lineage of gods and divine legends. They are a great source of mythological chronology and contain references to regional architectural and artistic developments.

### **Mahabharata and Ramayana**

The Mahabharata and the Ramayana are the two main historic epics in Indian culture. Although initially meant as secular texts, both introduce a number of deities.

The **Mahabharata** is an epic poem completed between 300 BC and 500 AD. The main characters are the warring families Pandava and Kaurava. **Krishna**, one of Hinduism's most popular gods, is introduced through the epic, as an incarnation of Vishnu. He is surrounded by the attentions of the gopis or cow-girls and had 16,108 wives. The **Bhagvadgita** is considered the apogee of the poem and is the main religious text for Hindus. It takes the form of Krishna's address to one of the Pandava brothers, as they waited for the great battle of the Mahabharata to commence. It addresses the need to do ones duty, within the confines of the caste restrictions and with devotion to a supreme and personal God.

The **Ramayana** was completed between c.350 BC and 250 AD, and also relates originally secular events. The central figure is **Ram**, the ideal king and lover. The best loved of the 7 books are the last three that tell the

story of the help Ram receives from his friend **Hanuman**, the monkey king, and the battle with Ravana after Sita (Ram's wife) is kidnapped.

From about 500 AD, Hinduism began to crystallize into two main sects devoted to Shiva (**Shaivites**) and to Vishnu (**Vishnuvites**), with numerous sub-divisions within both.

### **Puja**

Puja is the act of worship. Most Hindu homes have a room or a corner dedicated to one of the gods, and families visit specific temples on different occasions. The act of performing puja often focuses on a particular desire for something: good health, good exam results or the birth of a son. An offering is made to God, and the vision of god or darshana. Puja is usually performed on an individual basis, but occasionally groups gather to sing or pray together.

Krishna mentions puja in the Bhagvadgita. After the Vedic age, when ritual was only performed by Brahmins, Hinduism became a more 'democratic' faith. Divine images were created in stone, wood and metal and sanctified,

giving the common people access to the Godhead.

### **The Hindu Caste System**

The Rig Veda describes how the original caste was divided into 4 distinct layers: the **Brahmans** who represent the unpolluted and come from Brahma's mouth; the **Kshatriyas** or warrior class who come from Brahma's arms; the **Vaishays** or mercantile and professional class coming from Brahma's thighs and finally the **Shudras** or working class, coming from Brahma's feet. Those considered to fall outside these groups are known as the untouchables, as contact with such a person was considered polluting to the soul. They were restricted to the professions that dealt with the dead and excrement. In addition there are many thousands of sub-castes, with 1,800 sub-divisions

of the Brahmin caste alone. There are strict requirements regarding the interaction between castes, prohibiting inter-marriage and the eating of food that has been prepared by a member of a lower caste.

The **Newari caste system** in the Kathmandu Valley traditionally grouped people by occupation. Newar castes range from priest or astrologer caste representing the top of the spectrum to the lowest castes such as tailors, and nail cutters. The untouchables, or dalits, fall outside the spectrum and the term essentially connotes oppressed people. However, there are numerous ethnic subdivisions amongst those termed dalit and they do not represent a homogenous group.

The current system in Nepal is attributed to the reign of King Sthiti Malla (1382-95), and was codified in the 1854 Maluki Ain (Law Code).

A highly stratified document, it dictated the professions each caste could perform and imposed numerous social restrictions. Legally the code has not been relevant since the 1967 Constitution, yet it still has many social implications in present day Nepal. The old order is particularly influential within the Newari communities of Patan, Kathmandu and Bhaktapur.



## The Main Hindu Deities

### Brahma

The Creator, one of the central Hindu Trinity along with Vishnu and Shiva. In early vedic writing Brahma is the power of the universal principle that governed the universe. Worship of Brahma was at its height in the 4th- 5th centuries AD, and by the 6th century AD it was effectively overtaken by Vishnu and Shiva worship. This accounts for the lack of temples dedicated to the god, as the main period of temple building was yet to start. Brahma carries the Veda book, a water vessel and the beads of time. **Saraswati** is the consort of Brahma, and is worshipped as the goddess of learning and education in her own right. Saraswati is usually white in colour and is depicted riding a swan.

### Vishnu

The Preserver, with 10 incarnations. Vishnu took these forms to save the world from disaster.

**Ram and Krishna** are the most influential of the incarnations of Vishnu, both of whom are human in form. The incarnations are: the Fish, Tortoise, Boar, Half-man half-lion, Dwarf, Ram with an Axe, Ram, Krishna, Buddha and Mounted on a horse Kalki.

The final incarnation, will accompany the final destruction of this present age. Vishnu's consort is **Laxmi**, goddess of wealth and light, who is worshipped during the Tihar festival. His vehicle is **Garuda**, the winged man-bird figure and arch enemy of the Nagas (snakes).



### Shiva

The Destroyer, the power through whom the universe evolves. He is considered more remote than Vishnu, but is a popular subject for stone carvings and metal work and is always accompanied by his vehicle the Nandi (Bull). His manifestation as the **Nataraja**, the 14 armed Lord of the Dance, shows him dancing in a ring of cosmic fire but **Pashupati**, the Lord of Beasts is probably Shiva's most popular manifestation in Nepal. The **Lingam**, a phallic symbol of energy and fertility is the most common representation of Shiva. **Parvati** is Shiva's wife and their sons are the elephant headed **Ganesh**, and the 6 headed **Kartikkeya**.

### Ganesh

Certainly one of the most popular gods who frequently appears at gateways and on door frames as the great clearer of obstacles. Any new venture begins with prayers to the rotund deity, and the Kings of Nepal visit his shrine soon after their coronation. Ganesh owes his elephant head to his violent father, Shiva, who decapitated



him after failing to believe the son was his own. As he repented Shiva promised to replace the severed skull with that of the first animal to pass by- in this case, an elephant. Garuda's vehicle is a rat or a shrew.

### Shakti or Durga

Worship of the female goddess developed largely out of **Tantrism**, which in many cases contradicts the general themes of Hinduism. Sacrifice, ritual sexual intercourse and other taboo rites were followed and the worship of **Kali**, the destructive blue goddess who wears a necklace of skulls, emerged from this cult. **Parvati** is a benign form of Shakti. As **Bhairavi**, consort of Bhairav and thus Shiva, she is the goddess of war and as **Taleju** she was the tutelary deity of the Malla Kings and resides in the Kumari, Nepal's most celebrated festival, Dashain, sees many animal sacrifice in the name of placating Durga.



### Bhairav

Bhairav is Shiva's most terrifying form. He is bent on death and destruction- his name translates as terror. Bhairav can be black or blue and is always angry. When he is in his most terrible white form, he must be hidden from view and is only visible during Indra Jatra in the Kathmandu Durbar Square. He represents the forces of evil and must be placated.

### Indra

God of the Heavens and of Rain. He is linked to the natural elements and is worshipped to provide good harvests. The festival of Indra Jatra in the Kathmandu Durbar Square involves raising a ceremonial pole to placate the god.

### Nagas

Nagas (snakes) play a prominent role in Nepali mythology. They provide rain and have been traditionally associated with avoiding drought- when snakes leave the valley it is a biological indicator that the water table has been lowered. Representations of Nagas carved in stone, wood and cast in metal can be seen all over the Kathmandu Valley.

# KINGS & RULERS OF NEPAL

## Pre-Historic 1 or Gopala Period



### Before 700 BC

The period lasted for 521 years and the dynasty had 7 Kings  
First King – Bhuktaman

## Pre-Historic 2 or Kirata Period



### c. 700 BC – 78 AD

There were 29 kings of the Kirata dynasty  
First King – Yalambar  
Last King - Gasti

Table 1. The Rulers of Licchavi Period (c. 78 - c. 879 AD)

Rulers	Approx. Reign duration
The first Licchavi king Bhaskaravarma, was followed by his descendants Bhumivarma, Chandravarma, Jayavarma, Varsavarma, Sarvavarma, Prithvi, Jestha, Hari, Kuber, Siddhi, Haridattavarma, Vasudeva...	NA
Vrsadeva	c. 400 AD
Sankaradeva	c. 425 AD
Dharmadeva	c. 450 AD
<b>Manadeva I</b>	<b>464-505 AD</b>
Mahideva	NA
Vasantadeva	506-532 AD
Manudeva	NA
Vamanadeva	538 AD
Ramadeva	545 AD
Ganadeva	560-565 AD
Gangadeva	567 AD
Bhaumagupta	c. 567-590 AD
Manadeva II	c. 575 AD
<b>Sivadeva I</b>	<b>590-604 AD</b>
<b>Amsuvarma</b>	<b>605-621 AD</b>
Udayadeva	621 AD
Dhruvadeva + Jisnugupta	624-625 AD
Bhimarjunadeva + Jisnugupta	631-633 AD
Jisnugupta	NA
Visnugupta	633 AD
Bhimarjunadeva + Visnugupta	640-641 AD
Visnugupta	NA
<b>Narendradeva</b>	<b>643-679 AD</b>
Sivadeva II	694-705 AD
Jayadeva II	713-733 AD
Manadeva III	756 AD
Baliraja	826 AD
Baladeva	847 AD
Manadeva IV	877 AD

Table 2. The Rulers, or Probable Rulers of the Transitional or 'Dark Period' (c. 879-1200 AD)

Rulers or Probable Rulers	Approx. Reign duration
Rudradeva	NA
Balarjunadeva	NA
Raghavadeva	879 AD
Sankaradeva I	920 AD
<b>Gunakamadeva I</b>	<b>987-990 AD</b>
Narendradeva I + Udayadeva	998 AD
Udayadeva	1004 AD
Nirbhayadeva	1005 AD
Nirbhayadeva + Rudradeva I	1008 AD
Bhojadeva	1011 AD
Rudradeva I + Bhojadeva	1012 AD
Bhojadeva + Rudradeva I + Laxmikamadeva I	1015 AD
Laxmikamadeva I	NA
Jayadeva	1024-1039 AD
Bhaskaradeva	1045-1048AD
Baladeva	1048-1060 AD
Pradyumnakamadeva	1060-1066 AD
Nagarjunadeva	1066-1069 AD
Sankaradeva II	1069-1083 AD
Vamadeva	1083-1085 AD
Harsadeva	1085-1099 AD
Simhadeva	1099-1122 AD
Sivadeva	1099-1126 AD
Indradeva	1126-1137 AD
Manadeva	1137-1140 AD
Narendradeva II	1140-1146 AD
Anandadeva I	1147-1166 AD
Rudradeva II	1167-1174 AD
Amritadeva	1174-1178 AD
Somesvaradeva	1178-1183 AD
Gunakamadeva II	1185-1195 AD
Laxmikamadeva II	1192-1197 AD
Vijayakamadeva	1192-1200 AD

Table 3. The Rulers of Early Malla Period (1200-1482 AD)

Rulers	Approx. Reign duration
Arideva Malla I	1200-1216 AD
Abhaya Malla	1216-1255 AD
Ranasuradeva	c. 1221 AD
Jayadeva	1256-1258 AD
Bhimadeva	1258-1271 AD
Sinha Malla	1271-1274 AD
Ananta Malla	1274-1307 AD
Ananadadeva II	1308-1320 AD
Ari Malla II	1320-1344 AD
Rajadeva	1347-1361 AD
Arjunadeva	1361-1381 AD
<b>Sthiti Malla (Jayasthiti Malla)</b>	<b>1382-1395 AD</b>
Dharma Malla	1396-1408 AD
Jyotir Malla	1408-1428 AD
<b>Yaksha Malla</b>	<b>1428-1482 AD</b>

After Yaksha Malla, his sons established different independent kingdoms in Kathmandu (Kantipur), Bhaktapur (Bhadgaun) and Lalitpur (Patan). In time, the rivalry between these brotherhoods led to fragmentation and poor rule in the country as well as the greatest competitive building periods.

Table 4. The Rulers of the Independent Kingdom of Bhaktapur (Bhadgaun)  
(1482-1769 AD)

Malla Rulers	Approx. Reign duration
Raya, Ratna, Rana, Bhima	1482-1504 AD
Vira	1504 AD
Bhuvana	1505-1519 AD
Rana, Vira, Jita	1519-1522 AD
Rana, Bhima, Vira, Jita	1522-1523 AD
Prana alone, with Jita, or with Jita & Vira	1524-1548 AD
Viswa	1548-1560 AD
Trailokya alone, with Tribhuvana, or with Tribhuvan & Gangadevi	1561-1613 AD
Jagajjyotir	1614-1637 AD
Naresa	1637-1643 AD
Jagatprakasa	1643-1672 AD
Jitamitra alone or with Ugra	1673-1696 AD
<b>Bhupatindra</b>	<b>1696-1722 AD</b>
Ranajit	1722-1769 AD

Table 5. The Rulers of the Independent Kingdom of Kathmandu (Kantipur)  
(1482-1768 AD)

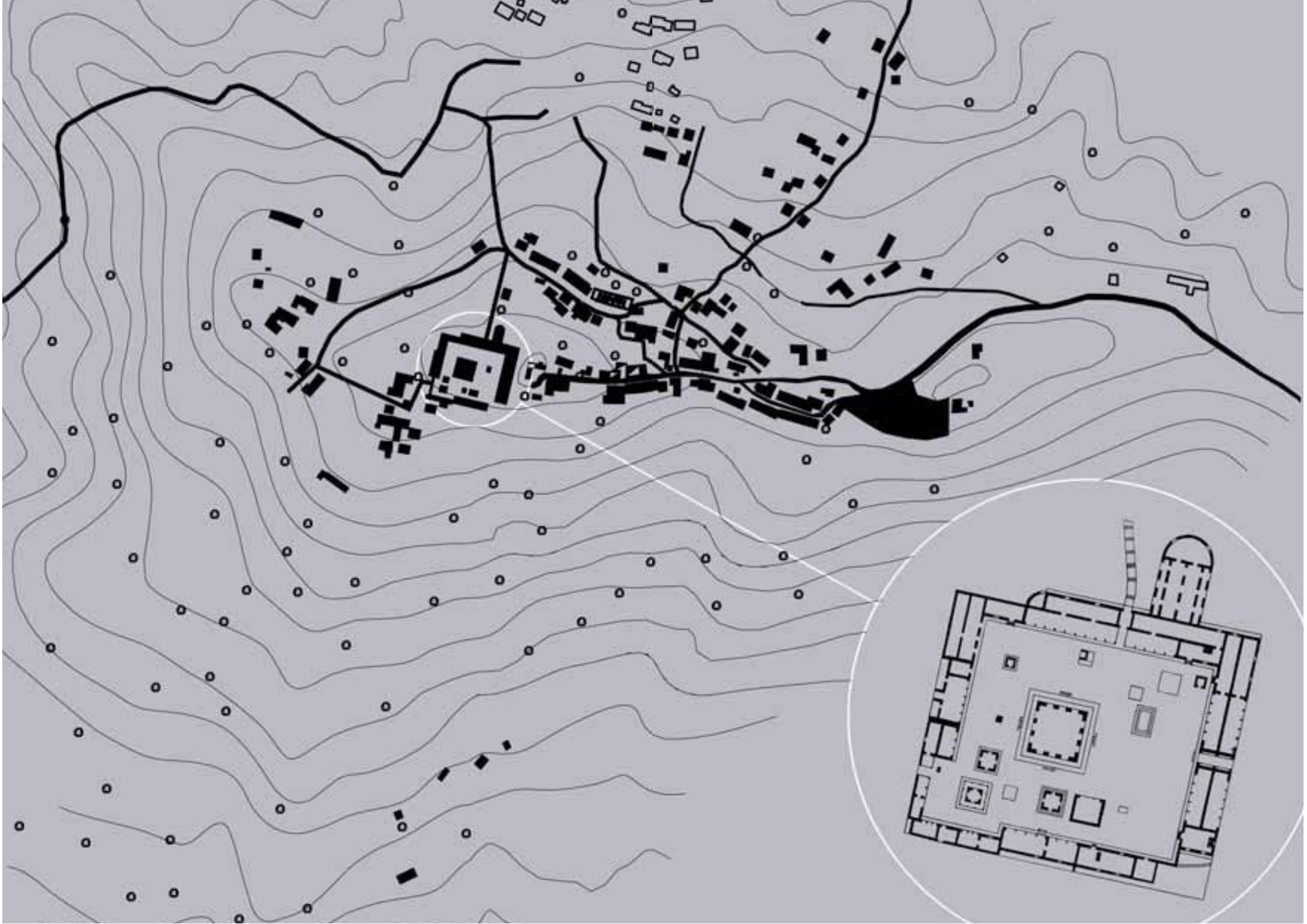
Malla Rulers	Approx. Reign duration
Ratna alone or with Ari	1484-1520 AD
Surya	1520-1529 AD
Amara (Narendra)	1529-1560 AD
Mahendra	1560-1574 AD
Sadasiva	1575-1581 AD
Sivasimha (with Ranajitsimha)	1578-1619 AD
<b>Laxminarasimha</b>	<b>1619-1641 AD</b>
<b>Pratapa</b>	<b>1641-1674 AD</b>
Nripendra	1674-1680 AD
Parthivendra	1680-1687 AD
<b>Bhupalendra</b>	<b>1687-1700 AD</b>
Bhaskara (Mahindrasimha)	1700-1722 AD
Jagajjaya	1722-1734 AD
Jayaprakasa (reign interrupted by his infant son)	c. 1769 AD
Jyotiprakasa (infant son)	1746-1752 AD

**Table 6. The Rulers of the Independent Kingdom of Lalitpur (Patan) (1482-1768 AD)**

<b>Malla Rulers, mahapatras &amp; one Shah King</b>	<b>Approx. Reign duration</b>
Raya Malla (his brothers & nephews in varying combinations)	1482-1519 AD
Visnusimha, the pradhan mahapatra, ruling Patan independent of Malla	1536 AD
Purandarshimha, alone or with his brothers	1560-1597 AD
Malla rule reestablished through annexation by Sivasimha	1597-1619 AD
<b>Siddhinarasimha</b>	<b>1619-1661 AD</b>
<b>Srinivasa</b>	<b>1661-1684 AD</b>
Yognarendra	1684-1705 AD
Lokaprakasa	1705-1706 AD
Indra	1706-1709 AD
Mahindra	1709-1714 AD
Viranarasimha (a rival ruled briefly)	1709 AD
Riddhinarasimha	1715-1717 AD
Bhaskara (Mahindrasimha)	1717-1722 AD
Yogprakasa	1722-1729 AD
Visnu	1729-1745 AD
Rajyaprakasa	1745-1758 AD
Viswajit	1758-1760 AD
Jayaprakasa of Kathmandu	1760-1762 AD
Ranajit of Bhaktapur	1762-1763 AD
Jayaprakasa (again)	1763 AD
Dalmardana Shah from Nuwakot	1764-1765 AD
Tejnarasimha Malla	1765-1768 AD

**Table 7. The Shah Rulers of unified Nepal (1769 AD - )**

<b>Shah Rulers</b>	<b>Approx. Reign duration</b>	<b>Prime Ministers</b>	<b>Dates of Office</b>
Prithvi Narayan (1722-1775 AD)	1769-1775 AD		
Ascended to throne of Gorkha 1743 AD			
Conquered Kathmandu and Patan 1768 AD			
Conquered Bhaktapur 1769 AD			
Pratap Singh (1751-1777 AD)	1775-1777 AD		
Rana Bahadra (1775-1806 AD)	1777-1799 AD		
Abdicated 1799 AD			
Girvan Yuddha Bikram (1797-1816 AD)	1799-1816 AD	Bhimsen Thapa	1806-1837 AD
Rajendra Bikram (1813-1881 AD)	1816-1847 AD	Mathbar Singh Thapa	1843-1845 AD
Dethroned 1847 AD		Jung Bahadur Rana	1846-1856 AD
		Bam Bahadur Rana	1856-1857 AD
		Jung Bahadur Rana	1857-1877 AD
Surendra Bikram (1847-1881 AD)	1847-1881 AD	Rana Uddip Singh	1877-1885 AD
Prithvi Bir Bikram (1875-1911 AD)	1881-1911 AD	Bir Shumsher	1885-1901 AD
		Dev Shumsher	1901 AD
		Chandra Shumsher	1901-1929 AD
Tribhuvan Bir Bikram (1906-1955 AD)	1911-1955 AD	Bhim Shumsher	1929-1932 AD
		Juddha Shumsher	1932-1945 AD
		Padma Shumsher	1945-1948 AD
		Mohan Shumsher	1948-1951 AD
End of 104 years of interim Rana Period (1846-1950 AD)			
Mahendra Bir Bikram (1920-1972 AD)	1955-1972 AD		
Birendra Bir Bikram (1945-2001 AD)	1972-2001 AD		
Dipendra Bir Bikram (1971-2001 AD)	2001AD		
Gyanendra Bir Bikram	2001- 2005 AD		





For more information please contact:  
UNESCO Kathmandu  
P.O. Box 14391, Jawalakhel, Lalitpur  
Kathmandu, Nepal

Email: [kathmandu@unesco.org](mailto:kathmandu@unesco.org)

Tel: +977-1-5554-396/769  
Fax: +977-1-5554-450

[www.unesco.org/kathmandu](http://www.unesco.org/kathmandu)



National Federation of  
UNESCO Associations in Japan